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DOT PASS TO FAA  
ROME PASS TO TSA REP JOHN HALINSKI

E.O. 12958: N/A  
TAGS: [EAIR](#) [CASC](#) [AMGT](#) [ASEC](#) [NI](#)  
SUBJECT: NIGERIAN AVIATION MINISTER ON U.S. AIR LINKS

REF: A) ABUJA 3008 B) STATE 188891

**¶1.** (SBU) Summary: The new Minister of Aviation met with the Ambassador on November 23 and expressed a strong interest in expanding aviation links between Nigeria and the U.S. and broadening cooperation in civil aviation more generally. He thanked the U.S. for its support through the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) in investigating Nigerian crashes. He indicated he would respond positively to the U.S. request regarding Air Marshals (reftel B). End Summary.

**¶2.** (SBU) On November 23, the New Minister of Aviation, Femi Fani Kayode, met with the Ambassador. When the meeting was requested, his staff indicated the Minister had issues about North American Airlines to raise and wanted to propose changes to the Open Skies Agreement. Instead, the meeting focused on the positive and neither issue was raised.

**¶3.** (SBU) The Ambassador passed the Minister a copy of the diplomatic note and draft Air Marshals agreement (reftel B) to the Minister, who declared it a good idea and indicating his support. The Ambassador noted that the U.S. had agreed to the Minister's personal request to extend the stay of NTSB investigator Dennis Jones to help with further investigation of the October ADC crash. The Minister thanked the Ambassador and said he planned to re-open the investigation into the Bellview crash, which he believed may have been caused by an explosion, or even a bomb, and that he hoped NTSB might help with an "independent" investigation.

**¶4.** (U) The meeting then continued in the presence of press, where the Ambassador congratulated the Minister on his appointment; offered condolences for the crash victims, and said we would discuss avenues of cooperation. The Minister responded by calling for more direct air links between the U.S. and Nigeria. He welcomed the North American Airlines flights and said he hoped more U.S. carriers would begin to fly to Nigeria and that he wanted Nigerian airlines to fly to the U.S. He said he was totally committed to aviation safety and security, and screening had been tightened up to allow no exceptions. He noted the recent discovery of banned substances (fireworks) that had been checked in as unaccompanied baggage.

**¶5.** (U) The meeting was opened to the press for questions. The only question was about what U.S. role there was in crashes involving Boeing planes. The Ambassador said that both Boeing and the U.S. NTSB participated in the investigations of any crashes involving Boeing planes.

**¶6.** (SBU) After the Press departed, the Minister said that Bellview, Aero Contractors, ADC, and Arik Air had expressed interest in flying routes to the U.S. Of these, he said Bellview had already submitted

its application to the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT). The Director of the Federal Airports Authority of Nigeria, who was present, said once a DOT application was approved, the Government of Nigeria (GON) would apply to the Federal Aviation Administration for certification. The Minister asked what had happened in the case of Continental Airlines. One of his staff explained that the case had been linked to Virgin Nigeria's application, which had delayed GON action. The Minister expressed annoyance that Virgin Airlines had gotten special treatment that disadvantaged other airlines. He said he understood that DOT was looking at the issue of Virgin Atlantic's role in Virgin Nigeria and implied that he thought it was legitimate to ask such questions.

¶7. (SBU) Finally, the Minister said he hoped that Nigeria could get more assistance and cooperation from the U.S. in improving aviation security and safety and promised to send a letter to the Ambassador with a formal request.

CAMPBELL